

Dartmouth Grange

2003 Final Report

Mass. Department of Agricultural Resources

The Dartmouth Grange hired a consultant to complete research and data collection on existing Operations and Management Plans of other community kitchens. With the gathered information the consultant synthesized the data and submitted a draft for review by the Grange's Kitchen Committee Chairperson, the Advisory Group and the MDAR. A progress report and itemized invoice with documented costs was written and sent to the MDAR and feedback was returned by the parties mentioned above in regards to the draft. Responses were acknowledged and further examination was made into various subjects such as liability and worker's compensation insurance; terminology of tenants vs. users because of implications of having a lease which could be responsible for dilemmas in the area of eviction notification; the terminology of kitchen manager vs. coordinator because the responsibilities of a manager, and the cost that accompanies it, may not be feasible for the Grange's start-up; snow day policies; guidelines for conflict resolutions between producers; and the numerous documents for a user to read and sign and the complexity of legal stipulations and the expressions thereof.

On October seventh, a public meeting was held to review the draft as well. The meeting was facilitated by the Kitchen Committee Chairperson and questions were answered by the consultant. Some of the questions inquired into what the rate for a user was set for, how much it would cost if a small specialty food producer decided to certify his own residential kitchen for the purpose of processing and how the regulations were developed for the proposed facility. Articles were printed to publicize this event and sent to the MDAR. A final Plan was completed from the compilation and review of feedback given.

Challenges occurred during the project which affected the plan of work. First, there were unexpected delays in receiving feedback from the Advisory Group. Between vacations and busy work schedules it was difficult to get the information we were looking for when we thought we would get it by. Secondly, the publicity for the public review meeting did not go out as planned. Even though we sent press releases to four local newspapers and two newsletters only one of the newsletters got the information out in time and although the newspapers were interested in the story, there was so much to report within the entire scope of the project the meeting information was cut in the process of editing or the article was planned for print after the meeting was to take place. And lastly, there was a minor obstacle of communication between the contractor and the consultant that eventually got worked out. The Grange wasn't clear in defining the work expected by the consultant and so the consultant often asked the Grange Kitchen Chairperson to provide information that the Grange thought should be acquired independently by the contractor. A clearly expressed charge by the Grange would have produced a more efficient and effective work plan for the consultant.

The main objective for the project was to develop a Operations and Management Plan that fit the scale and demand for the proposed kitchen at the Grange hall. This objective was reached, with a couple of minor additions/changes to take place after its submission.

One being a weighted evaluation system to help in the process of selecting users and secondly, a review of the agreement by a lawyer. The project goals were obtained too, with the exception of our goal for attendance at the public review meeting for the draft. We aimed for at least 15 potential users to be present and we reached only 5% of our target goal.

The Dartmouth Grange's Kitchen Operations and Management Plan being implemented in the Massachusetts food and agriculture industry is likely. A community shared-use kitchen to produce value-added products is a critical strategy to sustain many small farmers and their communities. Massachusetts values its working landscapes, farmlands and farms and small-scale certified kitchen facilities that are accessible and affordable are an important ingredient in efforts to protect them and support agriculturally related business development.

Small-scale food processing can also make a positive contribution to the community in the form of jobs, product purchases and product sales. Dollars circulate in the local economy longer than dollars from other businesses. Furthermore, input-output analysis shows that processing farm products creates more additional jobs and income in a community than any other industry. The Dartmouth Grange conducted a feasibility analysis and estimates 16 users, 4 existing businesses expanded, 4 jobs created and the incomes of 4 farm businesses secured and improved by direct sales to kitchen users after 2-3 years of operation.

The Operations and Management Plan is intended to be replicated for use by similar small-scale kitchen facilities that are designed for small producers of specialty foods. Through our relationships with various organizations, academic institutions and governmental agencies, such as the MDAR, we feel the effects of the project will positively impact not only Massachusetts but other regions as well. We have attended the Food Incubation Summit: National Conference and Education Symposium since their inception and plan to participate in the future, leading us toward networking opportunities across the United States. Our relationship with the community is a reciprocal one and we are confident that through our success we will be a resource for others as they have been for us.

A final budget of actual expenses and costs showing grant and matching monies and in-kind services used in the project is attached.

Proposed Budget:

DFA FUNDS			MATCHING FUNDS/EXPENSES		
CATEGORY	GRANT FUNDS*	CASH MATCH	IN-KIND	MATCH TOTAL***	CATEGORY TOTAL
Consultant	\$ 4,800	\$2,500 (Grange)		\$2,500	\$7,300
-Telephone calls	\$ 50				\$ 50
-Supplies	\$ 50		\$ 500	\$ 500	\$ 550
-Printing	\$ 100				\$ 100
Administration & Oversight			\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000
Volunteers Research, review, edit, consulting			\$2,500	\$2,500	
TOTAL:	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$5,000	\$7,500	\$12,500.00